

Arlogal
A Drama

Poems and Ballads

Blanche C. Hardy

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ARTEGAL

ARTEGAL

A DRAMA ; POEMS AND BALLADS

BY

BLANCHE C. HARDY

Author of

'PHILIPPA OF HAINAULT AND HER TIMES' 'THE
PRINCESSE DE LAMBALLE' 'ARBELLA STUART'



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Some of the poems in this volume have already appeared ; ‘ The Evil that was of Old ’ in the *Occult Review* ; ‘ The Promise ’ in *Vanity Fair* ; ‘ The Land of Faery ’ in *The Pall Mall Magazine* ; ‘ Moonlight at Naples ’ in the *English Illustrated Magazine* ; ‘ The Flowering Aloe ’ in the *Westminster Gazette* ; ‘ The Ghost ’ and ‘ Rome ’ in the *Gentlewoman* ; and ‘ The Glamour of the North,’ ‘ Dawn at Laghouat,’ and ‘ The Call of the Desert ’ in the *Queen*. To the Editors of all these periodicals I tender my thanks for permission to reproduce the poems here. ¹

TO
E. E. R. B.

ARTEGAL

Characters

ARTEGAL, King of Britain.

ELIDYR, his Brother.

HILDEBRAND, a Frankish Duke.

YNIOL, a Dwarf.

LYSTOVAL,

CARIOL,

FELOT,

TORESTAL,

MELAMONT,

} British Lords.

BORAN, in attendance on Elidyr.

SESTAMONT, a Scottish Lord.

SPY.

HERALD.

CHAMBERLAIN.

FIRST and SECOND MESSENGER.

ILONA, a Frankish Lady, Ward to Hildebrand.

GUENDOLEN, Princess of Scotland.

GISELA, maid to Ilona.

TANDRIA.

OLD WOMAN.

SOLDIERS, MAIDENS, COURT, CROWD, etc.

The Play is based on a story in Geoffrey of
Monmouth's *History of Britain*.

Act 1

Scene I.—Britain: The Courtyard of ARTEGAL'S Palace. Through a colonnade on the left a wintry landscape is seen. Opposite is an archway leading to the Palace. Guards and Huntsmen are moving about. Enter through the archway CARIOL and TORESTAL.

CARIOL. You are even now from the coast, you say; yet do not, I hope, so quickly purpose to forsake us.

TORESTAL. Indeed, sir, my intention has been to remain some weeks at the Court. My party returns to the ship this night, but lacking my company.

CARIOL. I am glad of it. Britain needs all her friends at this hour.

TORESTAL. You grieve my ears to hear you. In what manner? The death of our good Gorbonian reached me some months since, but I had hoped young Artegal furnished him a worthy successor, and made of Britain a prosperous realm?

CARIOL. So had we all—so had we all. But hopes fade, Torestal!

TORESTAL. Alas, what is this?

CARIOL. Stands your ancient friendship for me so stoutly still that you will risk something in the following of my leadership?

Artegal

TORESTAL. I am ready to stake all upon your judgment. Speak. What would you have me do?

CARIOL. Torestal, Moridus, the father of these three princes, was an evil king; Gorbonian, his eldest son, a just one. Elidyr, the child and youngest of the three, bids fair to spring to such another as this last; but Artegal, he who reigns now, openly emulates the vices of his father, sets no stay upon his most riotous passions, breathes but for pleasure, will hear no pleas and render little justice, is cruel, careless, lustful, drunken, infamous——

TORESTAL. Hold! hold! You deafen me. What dreadful tale is this?

CARIOL. Had I a hundred tongues, I could not relate to you one-half the crimes, the wrongs, the horrid cruelties, the vile outrages, to which this youthful king has already lent countenance, and indeed many of which he has perpetrated in his own person.

TORESTAL. But was it ever thus?

CARIOL. He began under great and happy promise; but with a swiftness to deplore, the heady wine of power and arrogance fermented in his veins, and now from day to day we of the Court scarce know for what fresh degradation to prepare. The land suffers. O we have borne it long, Torestal, but at length the end has come. 'Tis even for that I need you.

TORESTAL. What would you do?

CARIOL. He must die, and Elidyr become king in his stead. Hush! No words. I shall tell you more. Hark to the horns! The king goes forth to hunt.

Artegal

TORESTAL. Do you companion him?

CARIOL. Not this day. Now shall you see himself. With him, as you'll perceive, walks the ancient Lystoval, to whom alone will he at rare times lend some ear.

[*Enter from the Palace ARTEGAL, LYSTOVAL, MELAMONT, FELOT, YNIOL, etc.*]

ARTEGAL. Where's Elidyr, my brother?

MELAMONT. At his tasks, my lord.

ARTEGAL. Ever at his tasks! The boy will grow to a mere puling clerk such as Gorbonian would have made of me, had he his will—but I'll not suffer it. Bid him go hunt . . . Bid him go hunt, I say! Who moves?

LYSTOVAL. My lord, it is well known the young prince loves better his book than the chase—

ARTEGAL. Send him hither. (*Exit MELAMONT.*) You would hem the lad about with mean restrictions to bar him from me, but this shall not be.

[*Enter ELIDYR and MELAMONT.*]

ELIDYR. My truest service to your grace. You have sent for me.

ARTEGAL. Back, lords. Lad, have they whispered thee ill tales of me?

ELIDYR. Nay, sir—I have no ears for such—and it is known—

ARTEGAL. Then will they use their best endeavours to it. I would know this: was thy devotion set upon our brother, the dead Gorbonian?

ELIDYR. Indeed, sir—ay—

ARTEGAL. Why then, so are we the less likely to come at friendly issues. No voice? I spy the

Artegal

tampering mark in you: it is not hard to read.
Wilt hunt with me to-day?

ELIDYR. Good brother, I was at my books—I had not looked——

ARTEGAL. You will not. Good. I have the means to enforce it——

ELIDYR. They are known to me.

ARTEGAL. But shall not.—Elidyr!

ELIDYR. My lord?

ARTEGAL. No matter. Nay then: here is a piece of counsel for thee: art young, and mayest store much of that potent stuff yet: books will not teach you all. Lend little faith to aught your ears may carry, so the witness of your eyes do not attest it: there are knaves to spare in the world, and the slyest knave of all is he that would set good love by the ears. I'll tell you further—what's this?

ELIDYR. I shall remember you, my lord.

[Two soldiers enter, dragging an old woman and two children past under the colonnade. The woman escapes from them and rushes to ARTEGAL, flinging herself on her knees before him.]

WOMAN. Mercy, King Artegal!

ARTEGAL. What would you, crone?

WOMAN. By the clemency of Gorbonian was I suffered to subsist, most royal sir! yet come these men and drive me from my humble shelter—mercy! mercy! They bid me work for bread or be sold to slavery with these poor infants—say such be not thy will—bid them desist—the eternal gods reward thee—sir—sir——

Artegal

ARTEGAL. The matter, fellow?

SOLDIER. The hag has dwelt for long in your park, my lord, supported by the Palace leavings. Yesterday you gave order to level all such cabins that a fair track might be furnished for your hounds: therefore is she now haled forth.

ARTEGAL. Right. I remember it well. Dispossess them, and begone. I'll not be troubled with these matters.

SOLDIER. Shall they be offered for slaves, my lord?

ARTEGAL. If any be found to buy. Yon child is fair——

WOMAN. Ah! Can these skinny hands yet labour? Will this bent back stoop lower still? Mercy, mercy! Let me live, 'tis but a poor year or so——

ARTEGAL. You trespass on my patience. Smother these screams, or I'll have you whipped as well. Remove them. *[They go.]*

ELIDYR. The witness of mine eyes attests ill things. *[Exit.]*

LYSTOVAL. Sir, this was but a small boon even now demanded of you. Your brother Gorbonian rendered many such, and took his payment in a people's blessings.

ARTEGAL. Doubtless: a cheap market to bring wares to. My father Moridus granted few boons: and in these days I find myself much of his mind.

LYSTOVAL. Alas, sir, it ill becomes a greybeard like myself to speak evil to a son of him that was his father: yet, my lord, I would have you betime learn caution: and gather wisdom too where others have failed. Model yourself the rather, my

Artegal

lord, upon your admired brother, Gorbonian the good and just, and you shall smack nobly in the public eye; but, alas that I should say it! your father, though a brave man, was yet a king of the worst.

ARTEGAL. I will hear no ill of him. I loved my father. Did he not fall in service of this realm, battling with the furious fire-drake, whose dying flame-blown breath scorched his great spirit? Let me know naught but of his virtues.

LYSTOVAL. Then were your knowledge like to be small indeed. Your words, my lord, spring from a noble heart: but kings must set themselves above all natural affections. Witness in the matter of your marriage, whereon I must shortly touch——

ARTEGAL. You shall not need. I do not look to wed.

LYSTOVAL. Nay, sir, but there lies a full half of your duty to this realm, believe me. And the Scots king's daughter, with whom alliance hath been mooted——

ARTEGAL. A child: a green girl: I'll not have her.

LYSTOVAL. Nay, sir, but to our sorrow, the good Gorbonian left no son——

ARTEGAL. So fell the crown to a reckless wastrel like myself. Ay, old man, your sorrow is robust: you do not need to harp upon that string.

LYSTOVAL. Sir—sir——

ARTEGAL. Yet would you have successors of my blood: and therein follows your wit a somewhat halting conclusion. I care not to wed: there are willing wenches enough for my pleasure: and I'll have no sour-faced wife to draw the heart from

Artegal

merriment. What heir can you desire me better than my brother Elidyr? He is a model youth: and one far dearer to the people already than myself——

LYSTOVAL. In that, sir, you speak truer than you dream.

ARTEGAL. Why then, what further breeds disquietude? Enough, enough. And let me hear no more so patly of Gorbonian's virtues: the palace teems too thickly with them. I was my father's son ere I was Gorbonian's brother——

LYSTOVAL. At the same hour, my lord.

ARTEGAL. And will be known the rather so, I say! Enough of these words. Call up the chase. We shall let the whole day slip an we make no speed. What! Hillo, hillo, away!

[Huntsmen and dogs gather, and exeunt with

ARTEGAL. YNIOL goes through arch.

CARIOL. What say you, Torestal? Do you stand with us in our purpose?

TORESTAL. I am yours indeed.

LYSTOVAL. He will hear no reason.

MELAMONT. An he have set his father for his guide, a quick removal were the best for all.

TORESTAL. The prince is but a child——

CARIOL. The easier moulded then. What say you, friends? Are we all purposed? There shall be no back-sliding.

ALL. None! None!

LYSTOVAL. 'Tis but a poor six months since his brother died. Might we not hope a fortunate bettering yet?

Artegal

MELAMONT. So didst thou plead, Lystoval, three moons ago!

CARIOL. And his cruelty, his lust, his carelessness, his self-loving have waxed the greater since.

LYSTOVAL. He is young—was straightly kept until the sovereignty fell thus unlooked upon him—

FELOT. Ay, and right wisely so. See how prudently had Gorbonian judged him! He knew his brother well.

LYSTOVAL. If it must be—yet I grieve for it. He might have grown to virtue and to greatness—

CARIOL. Might is no word for monarchs: too heavy an account hangs i' the scale. He has governed ill: will pledge no amendment: wilder excesses mark each day as it flies—

MELAMONT. He lives for pleasure only, will give no ear to wrongs of the afflicted—

FELOT. 'Tis true! 'Tis true!

CARIOL. He must die.

LYSTOVAL. Friends, I am old, and though against the will of numbers would not wean you from your main purpose, I ask you to lend ear now to my judgment. Depose this young king if you will, strip him of forfeited sovereignty in the favour of his child-brother; but, by all the gods I would adjure you, slay him not!

CARIOL. What then?

LYSTOVAL. Exile him, outlaw, set him beyond coasts that he may work no further mischief; but again and most solemnly I demand it of you, let no violence make essay on his life. There lies so black a treachery in the shedding of sovereign blood as

Artegal

can call no benison upon a following reign. Let him go—it may be heaven will be gracious——

CARIOL. Were this safe, think you?

LYSTOVAL. Easily: would indeed that it were not so! You know well the unprotected habit of his evenings, loose and unarmed among a rabble of slothful drunkards: it had been your purpose as I think to set upon him there and so slay. Let this yet be: yet have him bound and carried from the kingdom——

MELAMONT. This might be, of a truth.

FELOT. Best, perhaps, since Elidyr is thought to wish no harm to Artegal, and might hereafter cast up his death against us——

CARIOL. We act for the realm's good. Speak on, Lystoval.

LYSTOVAL. I have said. Spare his life: I have known him from a boy: his nature held great impulses. Since for Britain he has worked evil he must perforce be removed: yet leave him manhood and the years to come.

CARIOL. He will but fare the sooner to the devil for it: but you are right, and it matters little so he leaves this realm. Are all agreed? Let any speak if otherwise. The matter should be early set in train.

ALL. Well—well.

CARIOL. So then: and now to means and time. Some word or words should be provided as a signal: then let the gong be beat, and the men we shall prepare rush in and seize him.

FELOT. The king were easily provoked to speak of

Artegal

his father Moridus. Should not we hold that word sufficient, and let himself furnish us with our occasion?

CARIOL. As well as another. For the time, what say you to to-night?

LYSTOVAL. So soon?

CARIOL. What service in delay? I have set it forth, however, by reason that this gentleman, newly arrived, spoke even now of a strong party returning to shipboard at some late hour this evening. Here have we ripe opportunity for setting on foot the condition Lord Lystoval so raptly urges. The prisoner, being no longer king, may be given in charge to these with a strict injunction that his bonds be not loosed until he come to the shores of Gaul: when there is little fear he can gain party to return.

MELAMONT. Good.

TORESTAL. Shall the Prince know of this matter?

FELOT. Best not, till all be done. 'Tis a tender youth, and I'll warrant to prove a very malleable clay for the handling: yet brother's love—brother's love—and we know all——

MELAMONT. Why so: 'tis true. That creeps on many roads.

CARIOL. Till to-night then. Break, else may our conclave be espied.

[They separate and stroll away. YNIOL comes through archway and watches them.]

Artegal

Scene II. — Hall in ARTEGAL'S Palace. Evening. Outer door L. and inner R., both hung with curtains. Couches, and a great fire at the back. The hall is lit with torches. YNIOL crouches by the fire. TANDRIA and two other women are in the room, also some attendants. Shouts are heard without: enter ARTEGAL attended, CARIOL, LYSTOVAL, FELOT, MELAMONT, TORESTAL, and other nobles.

ARTEGAL.

Off with this harness: fetch me a cup of mead.

[Attendants remove his arms and lay his sword by his couch.

Not there: remove: the thing is stained, I say.

Give me my robe.

YNIOL.

Send not thy sword away!

ARTEGAL.

Who spoke? Am I to bid a hundred times?

Close in.

[His sword is carried away, a loose robe thrown on his shoulders, the doors closed and curtains drawn. Food and drink-horns are brought in.

ARTEGAL throws himself on his couch.

CARIOL.

A merry chase and long?

ARTEGAL.

Why, that.

Was it not pretty, yon music of the hounds

When the spent quarry turned at bay?—Felot,

You have a villa, looking o'er the stream,

Fair set: a goodly place, and well retired,

I have ta'en a liking for it.

FELOT.

The honour's mine.

Artegal

ARTEGAL.

Shall I have it of you?

FELOT.

Sir, with all my heart.

ARTEGAL.

Why, that is well. I'll ride to it to-morrow.

FELOT (*aside*).

Thus ever! With our service, properties,
Our wealth, our women—Fortune's kind in this,
His flighty eye fell not on my fair wife,
He had reached for her too else. I have mewed her
fast

From this pernicious court . . . The hour is ripe.

TORESTAL.

I am glad to aid your vengeance.

ARTEGAL.

Never sure

May life outpeer these days of jolly youth!
The hot blood rioting in the veins: mad mirth
And easeful rest: desires but waked to cram
With surfeiting:—Pity the bloodless fools
Who shirk such natural joys and lift cold eyes
To heights impregnable! Drink, laugh and live!

ALL (*drinking*). To Artegal!

[*The wind rises, and is heard whistling outside.*]

TANDRIA.

Some evil spirit rides abroad this night,
Hark how the doom god thunders!

ARTEGAL.

For a sport

Let us defy these auguries of fate
And make our masters slaves! Set wide the door.

[*The door is thrown open.*]

Ho, spirit of storm that rides upon the wind,
Avoid! We mock this whirling symphony,

Artegal

Lashings of impotent rage! A screaming wrack
Withered and outworn gods! Look, look. Ha!
Ha!

[A sudden gust of wind slams the door.]

LYSTOVAL.

Sir, sir, what have you done?

ARTEGAL.

The spirits scatter,
And handless straight we are closed from harm
within.

They are lessoned swift. You shake?

LYSTOVAL.

This is not well.

TANDRIA.

Folk whisper how the daughters of death ride forth
On winds like these, to choose unwary prey—
How if you vexed them, sir? Hark, hark again!

ARTEGAL.

You are gloomy all to-night. What baleful looks
To please a wearied man! Fill up your horns:
Fetch here the dice. You'll play my adversary,
Melamont?

MELAMONT. I am at your pleasure, sir.

ARTEGAL.

Where's Tandria? Come, sit close. Hold that for
me.

Set out the board. Now for our stakes: fall to.

*[Attendants bring a table and dice: ARTEGAL and
MELAMONT play: the others crowding round.
Enter a messenger.]*

MESSENGER.

Please it your grace, the sons of Erephon
Are taken, and wait your judgment under guard.

ARTEGAL.

I have forgot the offence.

Artegal

LYSTOVAL. This may recall it.

Sir, in a noble fury, three nights since,
These youths set on the man who would by stealth
Have robbed their sister's honour:—and he was
slain.

ARTEGAL.

Is't so?—Why, then, let 'em be lashed for it:
Or hanged—I care not. What fall of the dice was
that?

MELAMONT.

One you will scarcely better in a night:
A double twice.

ARTEGAL. So! I must see to this.

MURMURS.

Shame! Shame! Unworthy king! Cruel! Un-
just!

CARIOL (*aside*).

Delay the message.

ARTEGAL

Tandria, I do not like
The fashion you have looped your hair. Let loose!
[*He pulls at her hair and it falls down. He
laughs loudly, then suddenly falls silent, star-
ing before him.*

MELAMONT.

My lord, the cast is yours.

FELOT.

Sir, do you ail?

ARTEGAL.

Thoughts, thoughts. What now? I had a dream
last night:

A mighty eagle swooped upon this land
And seized me in his talons, and would have swept
Adown the wind: but when I came to look

Artegal

In the face of him, it was my royal sire,
Moridus!

CARIOL. What ho! Sound the gong! Ad-
vance!

[*All spring to their feet: MELAMONT strikes the
gong: guards and soldiers enter: the women
shriek.*]

ARTEGAL.

What din is this? Cease! Am I king of Britain?

CARIOL.

No more. You have run your course and failed.

ARTEGAL.

My sword!

YNIOL.

Sir, you have sent it hence.

ARTEGAL.

Another then!

YNIOL.

There are no more here.

ARTEGAL.

Ah wanting! wanting! wanting!

Guards ho!

CARIOL.

They are instructed in our purpose.

LYSTOVAL.

Sir, you shall do yourself poor service thus
To accept our deed in passion. What's resolved
Hath been with careful grieving beaten out,
Nor hastily embarked on. Help there's none
For you, for us, for the realm but only this.

CARIOL.

Carry the women hence. When all is done
They shall go free. Till then, close prisoners.
We'll have no meddling erst.

ARTEGAL.

Cease screaming, fools!

[*They are carried out.*]

Artegal

Even you, Lystoval, in opposing ranks
'Gainst me you swore to serve . . . Well, since
 you come
To claim so wild an audience, I will hear you.
No choice. Speak on.

CARIOL. We ask no boons of you,
Artegal, king no more. Dishonoured, fallen,
From that great seat you have so vilely held:
Britain will bear your yoke no longer: stoop
And pass this stained crown to him on whom
Our hopes are set, young Elidyr, chosen king!

ARTEGAL.
The fellow is mad—what, all? The child in't too?
Back, back, I say! Who stands for Artegal?

YNIOL.
I!

ARTEGAL. Silence else? Not one in all of you
That filled my court and cringed upon my fame,
To guard my halls against this murderous band
Whom envious bile has stirred to petty hate?
A pack of snarling curs that snap my heels—
Off, dogs! Kings are not to be daunted thus!

CARIOL.
Your words are dumb to us. Not for poor spoil
Nor wretched spite are we assembled here
On dark and desperate purposes. Artegal,
It is decreed you be henceforth deposed
From kingship o'er this realm, and stand attaint
A traitor to that state you have served so ill:
Upon which onerous and dreadful charge
Your very life hangs forfeit and condemned.

ARTEGAL.
You have studied well to set your villainy

Artegal

In nice and chosen phrases. Hear me now.
The King is King. Being mortal, he may die,
But from his brow the crown his fathers wore
Shall not be wrested else.

FELOT. Sir, might has power
To enforce the sentence wisdom may command.

ARTEGAL.

Might! Might unjustly wielded, as I think,
Sums up the crime you would so largely urge
In my default.—Knows Elidyr of this?

[*They hesitate, and look from one to another.*
Then FELOT speaks.

FELOT.

The Prince is with us in our enterprise.
He sorrows at the oppressions he has seen
And promises amendment. With his aid
We look to find such peace as Britain knew
Beneath the rule of great Gorbonian.

ARTEGAL.

Hell take Gorbonian! I will hear no more.
Back, all of you.

MELAMONT. Our deed is yet to do.

Do you yield your arms, my lord?

ARTEGAL (*seizing a torch from the wall*).

Not this side death!

Down, down! Draw then, and on!

LYSTOVAL. Stay! Yield you, sir!

Your blood will not be shed: it is agreed:

They dare not strike!

ARTEGAL. The better for my blows.

LYSTOVAL.

I would not from my soul that this should be:
Yet there's no help.

Artegal

CARIOL. Seize him and bind him fast.
[*The guards close about ARTEGAL, and after a struggle, his arms are bound.*]

FELOT.
Ha miscreant king! You are conquered at the end.
That villa of mine, across the brimming stream,
Wilt visit it to-morrow?

ARTEGAL. Complete your work.

CARIOL.
Our work is near accomplished. Little need
To sum once more the tale of gathering wrongs
By which this too-brief reign must hang henceforth
In mournful memory. You stand charged and
judged.
Your life should pay the price. This is remitted:
And by the prayers of ancient Lystoval
Commutated to an exile.

YNIOL. King! My King:

FELOT.
You will be carried bound beyond the seas
Where, outlawed, left on Gaul's inclement shore.
Have you not meted worse to worthier men?

LYSTOVAL.
With heavy heart must I attest harsh words
Who gladly would refute them. Heaven turn
This adverse fate, and through the gloom of it
Work out the desperate balance of your soul!

MELAMONT.
You have raised crime to eminence: trampled
virtue:
Oppressed the poor. This doom of ours is just.
No pity stirs within my soul for you.

Artegal

TORESTAL.

I count my sojourn at your court by hours,
Yet must in justice add my voice to these.
Gods aid our land to cast such ulcerous growth
From out her groaning heart!

ARTEGAL. Are gods your friends?
Say devils rather!

CARIOL. Twice this heavy night
You have mocked the powers. O impious and pro-
fane!
Well is it that in such unstable hands
No longer rests the omnipotence of kings!

ARTEGAL.

And were it so—my faith! the morrow's dawn
Should witness every knave of you strung up,
Lashed, hanged and quartered, ere I broke my fast.
A merry meal—ha ha!

CARIOL. Peace, ribald prince!
You are tried for death and worse.

ARTEGAL. Should I yet choose
I might rebut your every accusation.
Disloyal traitors! Not content to break
Upon an unarmed man who held you guests,
You will burst the age-old barriers set about
The blood of kings: will change the brother's heart
To gall of bitterness—O brave! O great!
Amongst you ranks but one misshapen dwarf
In whom the loyal spark burns yet unquenched—
Woe to this land when wanton treachery
Springs at her mark and reaches it! I scorn
To justify my rule to such a court.

FELOT.

Bold words to hide bad deeds! The bitter yeast

Artegal

Of long-fermenting hate within my breast
Upsurges in a shrieking mockery—
You that were late a king now bound a slave!

CARIOL.

Confirm me that the horses stand prepared.
Not in a wanton vengeance do we this,
As you might deem, poor dispossessèd youth.
The serried wrongs of Britain cry aloud:
Your fall alone lifts hope to her wild eyes:
Some meaner man set in a slighter place
Might win his sufferance to a hated grave:
But Artegal must rule or die, and death
Is outlawry. Go! and return no more.

[ARTEGAL is taken to the door, where he turns.

ARTEGAL.

Tower of my fathers! Fall upon these heads
That breed but thoughts of treachery! I set
My malison on you all. Kings' curses work.

LYSTOVAL.

Prince! Prince whom I have loved as mine own
son!

ARTEGAL.

Back from me, fellow: I know you not.

[Goes out.

LYSTOVAL.

'Tis just.

Honour will forfeit love.

YNIOL.

Master! I come!

[Exit hurriedly.

Act 2

Scene I.—(Five years have elapsed). A glade in the forest of Hercynia, towards sunset. Dark pine-trees all around, a small hut on the left, with a fallen tree beside it; a path runs through the trees from the right. Enter YNIOL, carrying a heavy wallet.

YNIOL.

A hut in the gladed forest! Fortune's kind.
Mayhap he will rest a night. No dweller here?
Why, that is not so well. No food, no fire—
I will make search within.

[Goes into the hut. Enter ARTEGAL, poorly dressed and carrying a spear. He comes down slowly just as YNIOL emerges again.]

ARTEGAL.

The evening falls.

Yon cabin offers shelter? We will rest.

Who owns it?

YNIOL.

None that I can find, my lord.

But game hangs fat within the wallet here.

There's wood enough hard by for kindling fires:

I'll soon prepare your supper.

ARTEGAL.

As you will.

[ARTEGAL (sits wearily on the log, and YNIOL goes into the hut again and shuts the door).]

So long I have wandered through these desolate lands,

Artegal

Seeking the friendship every man denies,
I am fast to sicken with deceived hope :
—Yet shall not loose my purpose till I die.
Years! Years since Britain faded on these eyes,
A shadow in the night.—The chattering gulls
Swept round our barque while through the mirk
we plunged
As though they too would thrust me out from
home.

O smouldering hate! that turned a brother's sword
Against a brother . . . My promise shall be kept.
And Gallia's king refused the aid I asked
—Demanded—by my right from peer to peer :
They mocked me—ha! that rankled . . . not forgot.
I bide my hour. When fortune's tide shall turn
As in the end it must, and Artegal
Once more upon his rightful throne is set,
There be long scores to settle . . . So to Rome,
Long weary tramping on a footsore road,
To Rome the free, the all-powerful, the great,
The giant empire of the earth, the just!
Should she not yield me of her legionaries
To stamp out treachery wherever rife?
. . . And first I dreamed my quest had found its
goal:

Her senators lent grave ear unto my wrongs,
Nodded a solemn answer to my plea,
Promising all. I lingered at their will :
Might linger yet—deluded, hope-crammed,—I!
A starveling pensioner of Rome! To hang
About her court with tributary kings
And add another jewel to her pride! . . .

Artegal

I broke from them. I wander still. So sure
My star must rise again and flood the heavens—
I pass this forest of Hercynia
To the Emperor of the Franks. Do he refuse,
I know not . . . Horns within the wood!—They
hunt—

Old scenes crowd back on memory's darkened
glass—

I have had word spies of my brother's pay
Do hunt my life.—Let come, let come at will:
They will not trap me captive more. Not so
Had I dealt with thee, Elidyr.—What is this?

[Enter ILONA by the path through the forest.

ARTEGAL rises.

ILONA.

I have missed my people wandering in the wood.
Will you suffer me to rest here where you dwell?
They will not long delay. This clearing aids.

ARTEGAL.

Would I might offer you a less rude shelter!
'Tis all we have.

ILONA (*aside*). What woodman strange is this?
(*Aloud*).

I am sorry for your trouble. My women name it
Scarce wise to wander in the woods at eve:
The wild boar roams at will, and whispers hint
At darker dangers. Here I shall be safe.

ARTEGAL.

Here you are safe. I pray you, madam, sit.

ILONA.

Your voice rings strangely. Are you of this realm?

ARTEGAL.

I am a gentleman of Britain.

Artegal

ILONA.

Ah!

Tell me of that wild land. Doth it not rise
A barbarous rock amid the tossing foam,
Hung o'er with mists and noxious vapourings?
I have heard so, oft. Men say the very trees
Grow gnarled and bent, not straight and tall like
ours :

An icy moisture wraps the fens: the sun,
All chilled and veiled in fog, bends no kind warmth
Upon the hungry fields—a place of ghosts!
The people, rude and savage, cultureless,—
Give me your grace, the peasant folk, I'd mean!—
Gladly you must have left it for our realm
Of friendly vale and richly pastured mead!

ARTEGAL.

They told you ill who spoke of Britain thus.
That storm-tossed island breeds a race of gold,
Whose hearts, turn where they will, are knit about
The mother in a faith that cannot die.
To the west—to the west—where falls the linger-
ing light,
She lies. I have strayed far, have wandered long,
But every night I lay me down to rest
I count my purpose nearer: every dawn
That chases darkness from a gleaming sky
Renders a firmer surety to my hope.
We who are sons of Britain cannot breathe
Far from the soil that bore us! So 'tis loved,
Honoured, revered:—the dear familiar speech,
The free wild air,—I weary you, I think?

ILONA.

You wake my wonder. Can men love so well

Artegal

A land of bleakness? Look, the setting sun
Stabs through our pines like lances tipped with
gold:

The rich brown earth receives them in her breast,
Transforming, jewel-like. Our footsteps fall
Noiseless on Nature's carpet: far away
The wood-bird calls; and on the fragrant air
Some distant brook like silver music plays.
How still the world! And there, beyond that
break,
One great snow-peak, rose-white! The sun's last
kiss.

Say, is this beautiful?

ARTEGAL.

It is not Britain!

YNIOL (*comes out of hut. Aside*).

Who speaks with him? Some blue-eyed Frankish
maid!

Pray heaven she draw a gladness to his eyes
So sad, so gloomed, till now. That bitter day
That crushed all youth and lightness from his heart,
Choked in his soul the mirth; he smiles no more.
A man of moody humours. (*Aloud.*) Sir! My
lord!

Your food is hot and steaming in the pan,
Will it please you to eat?

ARTEGAL.

Peace fellow! Let it be.

ILONA.

Sir, you shall do me little service thus
To recompense my idle wilfulness
With sorry thoughts of fasting men denied.
Your stew sniffs merrily; I pray you eat—
Nay, if you will not leave, I too must needs
Step self-invited to your woodland board.

Artegal

ARTEGAL.

You will share our humble meal?

ILONA.

I will eat with you.

ARTEGAL.

Yniol! Despatch! What service have we there?

[*Goes into hut.*]

ILONA.

Wore every islander such noble looks

I could believe them all he pictured me.

A goodly stature—but his eye holds death.

There's a command that hangs upon his word,

I scarce know how. Yon sour and thin-faced
rogue

My guardian brought to us but yestereve

Boasts a like race with this brave gentleman—

So might the wolf the stag! Both live and move,

Breathe the same air, eat, sleep,—and there lies
all—

As well the gnome claim kinship with the god!

Soft! He returns.

[*Enter ARTEGAL with a bowl of soup which he
hands her, and YNIOL with another which he
gives to ARTEGAL.*]

I thank you and I wait

To see you join me.

[*She sits on the log, and ARTEGAL at her feet.*]

YNIOL returns into the hut.

ARTEGAL.

Many moons have passed

Since I have ate in such fair company.

Others' distress must feed a wanderer's gain.

Will not your people tremble at this loss?

My fellow, should you wish, might carry word

Whither you left them.

Artegal

ILONA My dwelling is not far,
 (Altho' in this I shall not trouble you,)
 Yon castle on the westward hill you pass
 At entry to this forest. Did you mark it?
 My guardian, Hildebrand the Duke, rides lord
 Of all that calls me lady.

ARTEGAL. As we trudged,
 An hour agone, some shepherd spoke of him.

ILONA.
 Doubtless to name him cruel! O I know
 He holds poor treasury in the peasants' love,
 Yet count him not to blame for all. Stern, true,
 Nor do I 'scape his anger when aroused;
 But great men bear great burdens. I have thought
 We should not ask like virtues of the poor
 As from those highly placed; nor yet demand
 From monarchy the patience due from slaves.

ARTEGAL.
 You err. Kings owe a diligence never slacked
 Where hinds may idle.—Do I hit on truth
 In hailing you the lady of these walks
 Whereof my shepherd babbled? For 'Ilona'
 His praises tripped upon each other's heel
 So full they charged me.

ILONA. You have guessed me well.
 This forest's mine, and all the lands beyond
 Some twenty leagues. I wander here at times:
 May chance again. Do you dwell here?

ARTEGAL (*after a moment's thought*). For a while.
 Fortune of late has turned her face from me,
 And here I look for promised hermitage.

ILONA.
 What name is yours?

Artegal

ARTEGAL (*rising abruptly*). Men call me Leoline.
Yniol!

[YNIOL *comes out of the hut, removes the empty
bowls, and goes back again.*

ILONA.

I understand your meaning, and must crave
Your pardon for my boldness. Could I aid—
You spoke of sorrow—I have power here—
Give me the grace to offer what I may—

ARTEGAL.

O you are gentle! But in me behold
A man at war with fortune and with self,—
Stern wounds no kindly balm of yours may heal!
One forced to wander on an alien quest,
A brother hated—ah, no more of this!—

ILONA.

I had a brother once: I loved him well.
He died in battle.

ARTEGAL And you may love him still.
Death is the crown of love as that of life,
Fixing to marble, passions mutable:
Such surety is denied me. I was driven
From great estates: by treachery exiled:—
But these are turns which all may undergo:—
The sharpest that the child I loved should join
To plot my fall with men of baser breath.
There lurked a poison that must banish hope.

ILONA.

Perchance he loves you still.

ARTEGAL.

He seeks my death.

ILONA (*springs up*).

Here! But he shall not reach you. Come with me:

Artegal

Our castle offers honourable retreat,
And 'neath my banner I will undertake
No traitor shall come at you. Be my guest!

ARTEGAL.

Now by my faith I have sought the wide world o'er
Five weary years, nor ever yet beheld
Your match in this! 'Tis sure, my star must rise
You being thus gracious to me. I salute
This little hand, the first in friendship stretched
To one who walks an outcast from his kind
Since frosty sorrow beat about his head.
Rich blessings shower upon your path! For me,
This darkling wood shall shine in memory.

ILONA.

You will suffer me to stand your champion?

ARTEGAL.

No, fairest lady. Should I stoop to it,
The scorn with which my foes have loaded me
Might hang a leaden shackle here to crush
The spirit I have guarded through these storms.
You shall not enter in my clouded zone.
All fortunes linked with my unhappy name
Have fallen on sorrow and adversity.
I am of those who blister where they touch,
—Misfortunate wretches! Healing, I but sear,
And where I set my love, the shadows fall.
O maiden, fresh and innocent, pass hence!
Your kindness burns a lamp within my night,
I kneel henceforth at your remembered shrine:
Touch me not close! You play with perilous stuff.

ILONA.

Engendered peril fear, who then had known

Artegal

The greatness that lifts smiling eyes to death?
I will not cumber you with protestation:
My friendship stands, demand it when you will.
See, I am sought for. Hildebrand himself
Leads on the train.

ARTEGAL. Add to your gentleness
One boon. Speak nothing of my sojourn here.
Great matters hang upon my privacy—
Count me but as the woodman I would seem.

ILONA.

You shall be served in this.

[Enter HILDEBRAND, GISELA, *huntsmen, dogs, ponies, etc.*

HILDEBRAND. How now, mistress, what folly is here? By the hammer of Thor, I'll not permit these nightfall wanderings! Your woman here has well-nigh swooned with terror, dreaming you dead or worse. To horse instantly! Have these men molested you?

ILONA. Indeed no, sir. I have been safe enough in the charge of the good forest dwellers.

HILDEBRAND. See you stray not alone here more. Coarse herds and hewers!

ILONA. I am sorry, sir, for your displeasure. Gisela, my cloak.

HILDEBRAND. Fellow, here's gold for thee. (*Flings down a purse.*) Come, girl.

ILONA (*aside*). Farewell!

[*All but ARTEGAL and YNIOL disappear down the forest path. The sunset is now almost over, and the wood begins to grow dark.*

ARTEGAL. The night falls suddenly.

Artegal

YNIOL. Do we find friends, master?

ARTEGAL. Ay.—Nay, I should not have said it. Lift yon purse, Yniol, and hang it on the bush, that the next wayfarer may discover treasure.

YNIOL. Come, despised gold; and the better for the next wayfarer!

ARTEGAL. Yniol, I am weary to-night of these endless wanderings. How long since we have slept twice on the same earth clod?—No matter. Methinks I shall remain here for a while.

YNIOL. As it please you, my lord.

ARTEGAL. Were it possible, think'st thou, that thou shouldest fare alone to the Frankish Court, and carry word of mine to the Emperor?

YNIOL. I?—But, my lord—I would die gladly in your service, but will they listen to a ragged hunchback? For the realm's sake——

ARTEGAL. As well that as to a landless king. Essay it at the least. Essay it: thou shalt depart to-morrow. For now, build me a fire here, to keep the wolves at bay. I will prepare the commission thou shalt carry.

[He goes into the hut.

YNIOL. He's moved! He's moved! Ye gods, my thanks for that. I'll gladly aid him in his purpose.—My blood to melt the heart of him.—O that he might wake at last from this noxious death in life! Here's a branch—and another—so—alight! and I'll go seek more.

[He goes up the bank and disappears. Enter SPY, creeping thro' the trees.

SPY. I am so certain of the track I cannot now fail

Artegal

in it! he must be near. A hundred marks. I'd poignard Baldur the Beautiful for less; and this sunken prince is, as I think, but little guarded. I have failed never yet in such dark businesses; my present duty ranking simple after some. Shrouded horrors—ugh! But the trade breeds gold—I'll not think upon past phantoms. A newly litten fire—a trodden clump—plain signs for who has wit to read them—so! Thy command, my lord Felot, will early find obedience. A light in the hut—good, good, now falls he pat into my hand—

[Looks through the window. Meanwhile YNIOL enters on the bank above, sees him, creeps down, springs on him, throws him down, seizes his dagger and flings it into the wood.]

YNIOL. A wolf! A wolf of the worst, my lord!
Caught, caught!

[Enter ARTEGAL.]

ARTEGAL. What's this? How now? A light to his face. I do not know him, Yniol. Whence come you, fellow?

SPY. Sir, I shall speak truly, knowing well your pardoning greatness, only I beseech you, bid your man first let loose my arms, to which with his strength he causes exquisite pain—

ARTEGAL. Hold him the tighter, Yniol. Speak, sirrah, whence come you?

SPY. From the court of Elidyr, King of Britain.

ARTEGAL. Ha! . . . And your purpose?

YNIOL. His purpose lies yonder among the trees, my lord, whither I made bold incontinently to discharge it.

Artegal

ARTEGAL. You have sought my life.

SPY. It is true—a thing I may not deny. Yet slay me not, great sir and noble! Slay me not, ere I have told thee all! How I was forced to so fell and barbarous an intention—how the king and his nobles——

ARTEGAL. I will hear no spying tales against those of my own blood. Right well do I know the mirror in which Elidyr reads reflections—but I'll not learn of it from thee. Basest of human beasts! Go back to him who sent thee and say, till the wrong engendered five black years since be wiped into destruction, Artegal wears a life of magic. Let him despatch me no more night-shadowed murderers. My hour will come, tell him; till then, may his throne be haunted, fear-ridden! But I fight in the open: if he be well-advised, let him do likewise.

YNIOL. Sir, shall I not slay instantly this creeping damnation?

ARTEGAL.

I do not war with vermin; let him hence.
My vengeance flies towards a loftier mark,
The powers that veil their faces at his back,
Press in his hand the dagger and look aside,
Will pay and slay him when the work be done.—
Elidyr! Madness . . . To have come to this—
O I'll think on't no more. So, fellow, Go!

SPY.

Do I go free? O thou most gracious lord!
What benison of mercy here!

ARTEGAL.

Crawl, hound.

Artegal

Back to your kennel. The King has spared your life.

[The SPY creeps away, looking backward. The darkness falls, and ARTEGAL, seated on the log behind the fire, with YNIOL crouching at his feet, are only seen by the light of the flames.]

Scene II.—Britain. A room in Elidyr's Palace. Elidyr is seated at a table with papers, inkhorns, etc., upon it. BORAN stands by him.

ELIDYR. I have sealed all; see they be presently despatched. Who waits?

BORAN. There are no more petitions for your grace.

ELIDYR. Then send the messengers I'll have for Rome. I must deal clearly with them—and deeply too.

BORAN. They are here, sir.

[Enter FIRST and SECOND MESSENGERS. BORAN goes out.]

ELIDYR. You have had instructions?

FIRST MESSENGER. To the full, my lord.

ELIDYR. Not so full but that I would speak further with you. Relate me then how you shall progress.

FIRST MESSENGER. We have been bidden make all speed to the coast, take ship for Rome, and there present ourselves before the Senate, to whom your grace's sealed packet shall immediately be delivered. But, not content with that, we are to pursue secret and very urgent questionings about the city, lest peradventure the late king—

Artegal

ELIDYR. The king, man, the king.

FIRST MESSENGER. The king, saving your grace's honour's pardon, may have found friends there who still conceal him, or at the least can furnish some rumours of his direction.

ELIDYR. It is good; but you will need care and great discretion to light upon such traces, even if any such there be. And—be little careful of your company—My brother may have fallen into strange ways—a man hounded of fate will hit on odd revenges—you take me?

SECOND MESSENGER. Sir, we will leave no hole unsearched.

ELIDYR. Good—good. And when—if you shall find him—?

FIRST MESSENGER. Your grace was to furnish us with another sealed packet for the king.

ELIDYR. 'Tis here—gods speed it and bring him home in safety! Bestow it somewhere carefully about thee, fellow. Thou shalt have monies too: I'll see to it. But first, beyond his long absence, I have more instant fears for my brother's safety—nay, even for his life. Did'st know the lord Felot?

SECOND MESSENGER. Why, as the cat the king, sir.

ELIDYR. Three years since, when first broke on me the knowledge of that foul plot by which an unwanted crown was thrust upon me, I took means to chastise all boasting chief hand in it:—the earliest step, on which this follows. Old Lystoval I pardoned: he lay already on his death-bed: Cariol and Felot should die, the rest be banished. But by some mischance Felot found power to bribe his

Artegal

wards, and so fled, I caring little to pursue; and so much is history. But further follows. Word was brought me but two days since that the treacherous lord carried his hatred of the king my brother even beyond seas, and in foul and secret manners follows him to the death. Whether this be of sheer spite, or some warped hope to regain my favour, I know not: it must be stopped.

FIRST MESSENGER. With our will, it shall, sir.

SECOND MESSENGER. We'll find him, trust us, your grace.

ELIDYR. I do indeed trust you, good fellows both; and would I could myself embark on this adventure, but Britain first claims me and my stewardship. If caught, Felot may likely enough charge me with incitement to his vileness: let not the king credit this if you may. But yet——

[*Enter* BORAN.]—You would speak?

BORAN. I would remind you, sir, that 'tis the hour appointed for the reception of the Scottish Embassy, who will be here upon the moment.

ELIDYR. 'Tis true. Then, friends, we must delay a while.

[*Exeunt* MESSENGERS.

Prepare the chamber for these stranger lords. Who is charged with the chief conduct of this mission?

BORAN. The ancient Lord Sestamont was to head it, sir; but I am informed that the King of Scotland hath at last despatched his own and only daughter with the rest, and that it is thought some chief burden of the conference should rest with her.

Artegal

ELIDYR. The Scots King's daughter. There was talk years since, if I have been told aright, concerning betrothal between her and my brother, the rightful king of these realms; but it had scarce reached shape ere that ill-omened hour of his besting . . . Well, well . . . Is the lady well attended? These matters must be seen to. You have given me news.

BORAN. The embassy approaches, sire.

ELIDYR. Set wide the door:—and take this order on my treasury to yon messengers that have even now left me. Despatch, Boran—so.

[Enter GUENDOLEN and two ladies, SESTAMONT, lords, guards and servants of ELIDYR. BORAN goes out. ELIDYR receives the strangers, and they are seated.]

ELIDYR.

Our cousin of the Scots has rendered us
An honour all unlooked. Madam, I fear
Your furnishing will scarce stand in adjustment
With what your state is due. We pray your pardon,
Our ignorance our plea; and hope a remedy
Within short space to offer.

GUENDOLEN. Sir, I thank you.

I am lodged well enough; nor rode I forth
On any pleasure jaunt.

[Enter BORAN.]

ELIDYR.

Is it your highness
With whom in person I shall treat of terms
Touching this matter of the boundaries?

GUENDOLEN.

Nay, sir: Lord Sestamont's your mark in this.
My work will hold an hour.

Artegal

ELIDYR. The charts, Boran.
[BORAN *brings charts and lays them on the table
before them.*

SESTAMONT.
These marches of the north, my lord, are held
—And have been ever—by our border tribes;
But of late seasons creep your Britons up
Upon them unawares, to harry farms,
Burn homesteads, rob the people of their beasts,
And plunderously return without redress.

ELIDYR.
If such be true, it calls for mark indeed.
You shall have justice, sir, rely on it.
Yet first I must search diligently out
These matters and their proofs.

SESTAMONT. We ask no more.
My tale is mildly told, as you shall find;
And in your power and magnificence,
Presage of just and equitable law,
My royal master places urgent faith.
So greatly, king of Britain, is your love
Desired of us, our sovereign bade us urge
A sealed alliance on you, thus to swear
Equal and everlasting brotherhood—

ELIDYR.
Enough! This cannot be.

SESTAMONT. How say you not?

GUENDOLEN.
Hath Scotland erred in counting Britain friend?
Is here some ambush?

ELIDYR. Peace, I pray you!

GUENDOLEN. Nay!
No peace till these dark-riddlings be solved.

Artegal

ELIDYR.

I speak no riddles. Him you see before you,
Wearing the king's robes, seated in his seat,
Is but poor steward to an absent lord.
My brother Artegal lives yet; and while
He lives, is monarch of this land.

GUENDOLEN.

Yet you

Usurped his crown.

ELIDYR.

My all-unhappy name

Was made a tag for treason. I, poor wretch,
Long mourned his absence ere the damning truth
Broke on me as a bolt of heaven's own wrath . . .
Now every land is searched to bring him home.

GUENDOLEN.

If this were true——

ELIDYR.

Madam, no less. Well, sir,

Upon what other matters would you speak?

SESTAMONT.

No more complaints, great prince. My master's
wish

To ally his state with yours, you will not hear——

ELIDYR.

I am no king to plight my faith with kings.

SESTAMONT.

The gift he offers——

GUENDOLEN.

Sestamont! Enough.

The prince speaks well. Our embassy is done.

(*Aside to ELIDYR*).

A moment's private speech.

ELIDYR.

For a space, my lords.

I do commend you to my Chamberlain;

Yet hope to call you guests some seasons yet:

Farewell.

Artegal

[*ELIDYR and GUENDOLEN are left alone.*

GUENDOLEN. Prince Elidyr, I will confess
My purpose, when I hither came, was such
As I am glad to shed. I never knew
King Artegal—but yet—I had heard tales—
Perchance they were ill told, ill thought, ill
dreamed,

—But yet,—my royal father once desired
Alliance 'twixt myself and him, the king
Of Britain—only that, mark you, the king
Of Britain—

ELIDYR. So much, madam, have I heard.

GUENDOLEN.

Ay, but the close! Scotland needs friendship still.
I will speak it out. We are princes, and should
scorn

To let our shamefast blushes choke the truth.
My father wills that same alliance yet,
And I—had pictured you some slinking thief,
Hugging an ill-got crown, whose rightful lord
Unjustly struggled 'gainst unworthy odds.
I swore, myself, to travel to your court
And, spite my father, fling defiance at you.
But now—I honour in you your honour—

ELIDYR. So?

This too of Artegal's that I might grasp—
No more—no more—we must not speak of it.
Robber indeed if I should let mine eyes
A moment rest on what was sworn to him.
Yet first the wish—O were I king indeed—
Madam, my pains to search my brother out
Shall in your name and service doubly speed,
Knowing your wish, 'tis mine to see you glad.

Artegal

GUENDOLEN (*rises*).

Prince Elidyr, I had not thought to part
In kindness with you. Slanders have been spread
About your name: slanders I now know false:
I know—why should I shame to cry to all
The all I know?

ELIDYR. I would you could know more.
Three weary years I have sought upon his steps,
Nor ever found a clue.

[*Enter* FIRST MESSENGER. What now?

MESSENGER (*going*). Your grace—Pardon—I knew,
not. They told me the Embassy had left you. I
will withdraw.

ELIDYR. Remain. The business on which I had
despatched you concerns this lady also. Speak.
What would you?

MESSENGER. The monies you have commanded to be
given to us, sir, are all too great for the purpose.
We are to seem private men—

ELIDYR. Nothing can be too great for the purpose:
the purpose itself is grown trebly greater within
this last half hour. What's that? A nothing. I
have a mind to make it double yet. Speed, man,
speed is my command to you: and gold can furnish
speed.

GUENDOLEN. Whither go you, fellow?

ELIDYR. Speak freely.

MESSENGER. To Rome, princess, to search out my
master's master, Artegal the king.

GUENDOLEN. Ah!—And then?

MESSENGER. To bid him return, and take up once
more the sovereignty unjustly wrested from him,

Artegal

which our prince holds but in his name and till he come.

GUENDOLEN (*turning away*). My commendations go with you.

ELIDYR. 'Tis enough: hasten friend, and if you may, bring home the king ere our noble Scottish guests have left the court. I'll gladly double thy reward. Away! Away!

[*Exit* MESSENGER.]

GUENDOLEN. Upright and true! O wert thou king indeed!

Act 3

Scene I.—(A month later). Another part of the Forest of Hercynia. Great boulders just conceal a deep waterfall, on the borders of which stand ARTEGAL and ILONA.

ILONA.

Did I not know your love, I had not asked
This instant proof of it.

ARTEGAL.

Prove me by fire,
By sword, by any means but flight!

ILONA.

I ask
The thing I most desire—your life! O eyes
That play the shameful traitor to my strength!
I would have you think me adamant in love
Rather than, lingering here, to tempt despair.
O by the love you swore me, let this night
See you from hence! Must I tell o'er again
These haunting fears that pinch the frozen blood
From my arrested heart? I never knew
Chill horror-driven panic till this morn—
Hildebrand eyed me; and the stranger lord
Departing, veiled sly eyes, and whispered 'Watch.'
My steps are dogged: this very stolen hour
In peril snatched, my girl holds guard for me.
O promise that I have risked my all to gain!
They will trap you—Leoline—

Artegal

ARTEGAL. I'll bear no more
To smuggle self beneath a borrowed name.
I am no wandering chieftain: Artegal,
Crowned King of Britain, treacherously debarred
From fair and wide dominions, yet resolved
To compass back my rights before the end.

LONA. When first mine eyes fell on you, royalty
Hung on your look . . . Yet what is this to me?
Or king or woodman, I was yours—and am
Till death.

ARTEGAL. Till death!

LONA. When, sceptred and enthroned,
You have won back all, will you remember still
This forest with its dim and haunted aisles—

ARTEGAL. Lit by the golden glory of your hair!
Soft with the music of your voice, aglow
With light from those blue lakes that are your
eyes!
Sweet rose-flush storming conqueror to your brow.
Ah! You will come—

LONA. When you have need of me
So breath be in this body, I shall come.
Not earlier. Nay, I have spoken all before:
You have chidden me for coldness: is not this
The very crown of love that sets a price
So high on love it may not stoop to pay?
. . . Life waked for me when first your hand touched
mine:
My footsteps wandered in a world forlorn
Until you found me. Now, my boon—your life!
I ask it—I—

Artegal

ARTEGAL. You, you whose one swift look
 Could tear the very heart from out my breast!
 I go since you command it. I have heard
 To some Love comes a sword: into my heart
 Then, since you plunge it! I who never flinched
 Antagonism, or veiled or free, seek now
 Ignoble safety through a coward's path . . .
 My man's abroad: we should encounter here:
 I know not still—

ILONA. I will contrive some word
 To reach him as from you. O Artegal!
 Now may I gauge your love—equalling mine
 It could not better. If you will part to-night
 All should lie still secure. That lord who rode
 At dawn can draw no harm about you yet—

ARTEGAL.
 Who is he that has waked these fears in you?
 What should he know of me?

ILONA. His name's Felot:
 His country Britain. Ah—your look!

ARTEGAL. Felot!
 I should have guessed this earlier. Is he sped?

ILONA.
 Three hours since.

ARTEGAL He—sole one among them all
 Who from a rancorous heart spit out the taunts
 The others spared . . He . . This breeds bale indeed.
 No matter. When the wheel is uppermost
 No falls can harm us more. What worked he here?

ILONA.
 Himself and Hildebrand seemed friends. I think
 He brought from Britain messages.

Artegal

ARTEGAL. To this——!
Dear of my heart, you shall not fear for me.
Felot can work poor scathe: yet I will go,
But not till nightfall. As I pass beneath
Your castle's battlements, from your casement
smile,
Signal me with your hand, one tender look
And I shall pass upon my journey cheered,
Sure in the love you bear me.

ILONA. Artegal!
How long till in your arms I am clasped again?
Will it be weeks or months or weary years?
O me the dolorous waiting! Love's my dial,
Love is the morn, the noon, the eve, the night
Until you come again——

ARTEGAL. You will be true?

ILONA.
To death.

ARTEGAL. I come again to set a crown
Upon this radiant head, to lead your steps
Beside me to a throne: you shall not doubt
I come again——

ILONA. Hist! Footsteps drawing near:
Gisela!

[Enter GISELA.]

GISELA. Madam, there's dust upon the road,
Betokening riders! Haste you to your horse:
We must be gone with speed.

ARTEGAL. I'll set you there.
[They all go out together. Enter FELOT and the
SPY above, creeping among the boulders, and
watching them.]

Artegal

SPY. Have I not spoken truly? See how lovingly they pass: no eyes or ears for us; I have watched them so oft. Have I not earned reward, and a great one?

FELOT. 'Tis just. Thou hast done well, fellow; and I'll see to it shall meet with thy deserving.

SPY. Ay, but what, what? These are big terms with little meanings. I would have a bound set, and work for that.

FELOT. I will make no terms with insolence. Be moderate, or there shall be no more dealings. Canst prove nought of my will in this.

SPY. What, you will turn upon me yet? Nay then, King Artegal knew you best, and I'll follow his counsel in the future. Bethink you, sir, this is a more devious matter than murder, and an harder to compass.

FELOT. I do not think so.

[*Enter YNIOL behind, watching them.*]

SPY. The risk is higher, and less quickly past. Nor are affairs so closely at an end but that I can stay them yet. Come, my lord, to what sum shall mount my recompense?

FELOT. You'd bargain with me, knave? Then will I deny all cognisances, and you may hang for me—nay, I'll help you to the gallows. Back from me!

[*SPY springs on him and they struggle.*]

SPY. You should search higher for your tools, most noble lord, an you will shake threats over a sheer brink and look for no revenging!

FELOT. Off rogue! What—help—I stifle! Help, I say—

Artegal

SPY. What shall I have then for my work? Aha!
Mine now to cry the terms!

YNIOL. How, villain! Come fellows! We are on
them——

SPY. What—who——

[*He loses balance, and they both fall over the
rocks. YNIOL comes cautiously forward and
looks over.*]

YNIOL.

Mine eyes have played no tricks: this was Felot:
The other him my master, wiseless, spared.
I'll see their end. Ah, forty fathoms deep
A crushed and lifeless mass! I cannot tell
What villainy these looked to work us here:
It stands defeated . . . Artegal I spied
From yonder tor—Britain lies i' the dark
When fair Ilona beckons! But he's here.

[*Enter ARTEGAL.*]

Master!

ARTEGAL. What, Yniol! Homed in time's own
nick:

I had feared to lose thee.

YNIOL. By one hair's breadth, sir.
You have missed here tragic happenings. That
old foe

The lord Felot, stood on this very brink,
Wrangling with him whose life you spared long
since:

They struggled and they fell. Look down! Both
dead.

ARTEGAL (*looks over precipice. After a pause*).

It may be that Fate's frown has turned from me,

Artegal

The last cloud passing and the first foe damned.
I am glad 'twas not my hand that cast him down—
Maids do not love us bloodstained at their feet—
Yet praise the gods he fell.—The other too—
Why now my lady's fears are stanch'd. No need
This poor wrought scheme of flight. To reach her
—how?

I was to see her—will yet. Well, fellow, come—
I had fast forgot thine errand in these moves.
What tidings from the Frankish Court?

YNIOL. The best.
The Emperor craves your company: has sought
But found you not: even now makes preparation
Of armies to your aid: bids hasten to him
On fleetest foot—

ARTEGAL. Is here no trap, no treason?

YNIOL.
My own first thought, but by this head I swear
I have tested all and found true metal in it.
He loves justice: he is noble, and your friend.
Trust him, my lord, the stars would play you fals'er.

ARTEGAL.
I'll trust thy judgment. Mark my scarce uttered
words!

Let troubles fall in showers, they cease as swift
When bursts the sun through scattering clouds of
gloom.

Yniol, our fortune's tide has turned at last,
And on the topmost wave of it we'll swim
Smooth to the shores of Britain!

YNIOL. Gods grant it so!

ARTEGAL.
Why do you cry 'Gods grant it so'? Your voice

Artegal

Jars with these joyful forecasts of my soul.
Smile, man! Be cheerful! What, shall Artegal
Find his sole prop to fail him at the last?
What can we ask more than the hopes you bring
Together with the hope I hold? By Thor,
I would not change my present state this hour
With any man yet living. Smile, I say!

YNIOL.

Master, you shall not hint in very jest
At Yniol failing you. My blood is here
Till in your quarrel flowing.—Ah! You are kind.—
I know not why I sighed: perchance, because
Men who dwell long in shadow fear the light:
It is too clear: may kill: they snuggle back
Into the homely gloom—These words are wild,
Pardon——

ARTEGAL. Soft! One approaches. 'Tis Gisela:
I think I know the errand urges her:
Such tidings travel swift. My mistress sends
To bid me stay—or come—What looks are these?

[*Enter GISELA.*]

GISELA.

O do not slay me for the word I bring!

ARTEGAL.

Your pallor beats the blood back to my heart
As siegèd citizens to their inmost tower.
I fear who never feared. Speak! For I rush
Upon the cruellest sword your lips may bear:
I will have it full. What ill is come to her?

GISELA.

The duke was ambushed where you parted.

ARTEGAL.

Ah!

Artegal

GISELA.

No sooner had my lady lost your view,
Turning, one crystal tear upon her cheek,
A sigh in throat, than forth he crept on us,
Some half a dozen following. No word:
They hemmed us in and drove us, prison-wise,
Back to the castle.

ARTEGAL.

On! She needs me now?

GISELA.

Nay, hear me yet. There in her own brave hall,
With wild and whirling dissonance of hate,
Embroidered malevolence of shattering storm,
He set on her. She had been watched—and you—
The appetite of his fury fed with use—
Yon man Felot the traitor—

ARTEGAL.

He died too late.

Why was not this the arm to slay him? Once more,
Once more found wanting! Gods! She—?

GISELA.

In her face

The still white courage of a high despair,
She heard him rave. Then, rising to her heights,
Denied his power of choice for her, named you
Her king and lord—O sir! You have not known
Hildebrand in his fury.—At the word,
He tore the dagger from his belt and struck . . .
One gasp to me cried 'Bid him fly!' . . . She
fell . . .

Spake never more. She is cold—I have done her
will.

ARTEGAL. Do not weep, poor maiden. Hast heard
this tale, Yniol?

YNIOL. Indeed sir, ay.

Artegal

ARTEGAL. There is work to do yet. Dead, you say?

GISELA. Dead.

ARTEGAL. Bring me where she lies.

GISELA. My lord?

ARTEGAL. Bring me where she lies, I say. I have no gold to offer thee, else should'st thou have had it all . . . Cold, cold and still . . . But this service thou shalt do me.

GISELA. Willingly, my lord, if that I might dare.— Yet consider, she would have had you fly—her last wish—and the duke is to fear—

ARTEGAL. What are these? Tears? For whom do you weep?

GISELA. For my lady, my lord.

ARTEGAL. Put up, put up: she needs no tears of yours. Bring me where she lies. Now—in an hour it will be dark.—I was to look for her then.— She shall not find me backward at the tryst.

GISELA. Sir—sir—I fear—

ARTEGAL. Have no fear. Death is too merciful for me, he flies my grasp. I know her chamber window—there is a creeping plant there—I have marked it oft—you shall admit me ere the rise of moon. 'I come again—I come again to set a crown.'—But the crown of love is death,—and I was not worthy.

[He wanders away up the background, the others watching him.]

Scene II.—Interior of a room in HILDEBRAND'S Castle. On the left are steps up to an alcove,

Artegal

before which curtains are drawn: on the right a large open window to the ground, with balcony outside, in moonlight. GISELA crouches in an attitude of despair on the steps; maidens with flowers and torches sing a Dirge. A soft whistle is heard outside, and GISELA springs up and dismisses the rest, then creeps to the window and admits ARTEGAL and YNIOL, who is left on guard in the balcony. GISELA leads ARTEGAL to the steps, throws back the curtain and shows ILONA lying dead, then goes out. After a long pause—

ARTEGAL.

Now, come whatever ills the gods may send,
I have been greatly loved! This empty shrine,
Robbed of its precious jewel, but the span
Of some short hours since, held more of good,
Of wise, of fair, of gentle, and of pure,
Than the broad world else treasures: sacred lamp
Where burned a holy flame! Spring blossoming
tree

Untimely struck by thunder! O fair flesh
Soon to be dust, what are these hands of mine
That could not keep the blood within that heart,
Call back the lustre to those hidden eyes
Or breath to the virgin bosom? Dead . . . O man,
Wretchedest being! that can slay at will,
But not for all his powers and prayers give back
The spark he rifles in the passionate hour . . .
Ilona! Thou that never lackedst courage,
Up, up, my girl! Death's but an accident
Powerless to smite such love as ours.—She's cold.

Artegal

No smile for me . . . I scarce dare touch her now
That should have been all mine . . . So far, so far.
How small a wound may open doors to that
Worlds cannot measure! . . . Ha! I'll look no
more

On aught of pure or noble; farewell trust,
Pity, all kindlier motions of the blood!
Come stony hate, black fury:—let the sun
No longer shine upon a world she's left:
Write it in blood that Artegal henceforth
Breathes but for vengeance, purchasing which, he
flies

To join this holy maid, who should have lived
A queen in Britain . . . By this cold hand I swear

[He lifts her hand, but it falls from him.]

How's this? She will not let me have her hand—
What? Have they stolen thy heart from me so
soon?

Nay then, by mine own living hand I'll swear
Blood shall be spilt for it. I have borne much:
Some devil by my brother's hate suborned
Dogs every hope-lured step—I can recall
Occasion tumbling on occasion where
The reached reward was torn from clutching
hands:

I stand accursèd of the eternal fates:
I have leapt at stars and am thrust back to night:
That ancient wound, long healed, bursts forth
again:

I will bear no more—Hildebrand—Elidyr—
What man may combat destiny? I'll become
The outcast men have made of me—blood! blood!

Artegal

[*He gropes towards the window, where voices are now heard, and HILDEBRAND with three men burst in, one of them fighting with YNIOL, who falls dead.*

HILDEBRAND.

What's this? Ha traitor! At thee!

ARTEGAL.

Hildebrand!

You that have wrought to hell this dolorous day,
Well met! Well met! Take that, what, more?
Come on!

Come in your hundreds! You shall find in me
No man, embodied vengeance, charmed of life—

[*Stabs HILDEBRAND, who falls.*

FIRST SOLDIER. Help ho! The Duke falls!

SECOND SOLDIER. Lights! Lights!

THIRD SOLDIER. Fetch men! [They fly.

HILDEBRAND. Stay, stay! He is but one—dogs,
dogs and traitors, will you leave me? I am spent—

ARTEGAL. Still at thy groans? Again, again then.

HILDEBRAND. Enough!—What art thou?

ARTEGAL. I was king of Britain.

HILDEBRAND. A nation of savages, yet is the blood
royal. I was ill told—ah accursed sword! Dark
—dark— [Dies.

ARTEGAL.

Into the eternal darkness go thou forth
That slew the one pure thing beneath the heavens
That trusted and that loved me . . . Thou fair
child,

Rest now in peace: thy blood cries out no more.
One further thrust at my base brother's heart
—Would it were done!—and life is o'er for me.

I seek thee in the shades.

Artegal

[Turns and sees YNIOL's body.

O what is this?

Thou too, poor Yniol! Faithful to thy lord
'Neath lowering skies and in the face of fate.
Lie there, at her dear feet! Attend her soul,
Follow her lest his swarthy ghost molest—
I have sped him all too swiftly on her steps:
I should have cared for this. But I'll not fail:
The Roman's death stands ever to my grasp,
'Way with the Frankish aid—it comes too late:
I fling aside the kingly hope I hugged,
Ask only vengeance, and to thee! to thee!

[Rushes out by the balcony.

Act 4

Scene I.—Britain. A woodland glade. ARTEGAL discovered, in rags, sleeping in the foreground. Early morning; as the light grows, a hunting tent is seen indistinctly through trees at the back: enter ELIDYR and BORAN, down the path from the tent.

ELIDYR. And my messengers, for whom I have looked so long, not yet returned?

BORAN. There is no word of them, my lord.

ELIDYR. So: so: it is but patience still. Attend me to the bounds. What have we here? Some ragged sleeper so close about the camp? Wake him, Boran.

BORAN. Here you, fellow, come, rouse! rouse!

ARTEGAL (*waking*). O—Britain—Britain——

BORAN. He calls on Britain, my lord. What, art so lately fallen from the clouds that Britain smacks thus strangely on thy tongue?

ELIDYR. Who art thou?

ARTEGAL. A wayfarer.

ELIDYR. What voice is this?

ARTEGAL (*rising*). And who art thou?

BORAN. Darest speak thus rudely to thy betters, tramping scarecrow? Have a care lest thy back be lashed to such other ribbons as thy doublet,

Artegal

give it grace! To thy knees, fellow, and crave mercy of the King!

ARTEGAL. The King! Ha ha ha! (*laughing wildly*).

ELIDYR. Boran, come apart. Haste quickly to the camp, and see no man approaches until I give thee leave. Guard me this place. Dost take me?

BORAN. My lord, I like it not to leave you. Yon man is wild—your safety precious, and this is not secure—

ELIDYR. Do as I bid you.

BORAN. I shall obey, my lord. [*Exit.*]

ARTEGAL.

You know me then.

ELIDYR. I know you, Artegal!

Brother for whom I have waited weary years,
King, for whose sake I hold this land in trust,
You are come at last! Mine be the earliest voice
To cry your welcome—yet there shall not stay
One such unraised ere sets another sun
In all broad Britain! The very skies shall hear,
The forests ring, the rivers bear the word
Unto our utmost shores, that Artegal,
The King, is come!

ARTEGAL. How swiftly will your messenger return?

ELIDYR. You ask—?

ARTEGAL. He whom you even now despatched for the bringing of sworded bands to slay one unarmed wastrel? Were not the two of you enough to cope with single wretchedness?

ELIDYR. Brother, your words are strange.

ARTEGAL. Strange? Life is strange. Are not my clothes ragged? Do not my feet bleed? Are not

Artegal

mine eyes hollow and my cheeks sunken? I have tasted little food for long, and wandered far: my limbs are weak. I think I care not greatly now for what I came to do. Britain is fairer than I had dreamed. Look! look! There is a white violet. I heard the cuckoo's note at yestereve. 'Tis a great land for cuckoos this: they breed 'em to prey upon a brother's nest. I know not what falls to the one they chase——

ELIDYR. Artegal! Hear my words!

ARTEGAL. It was my name long since. Men said I lost it by my folly: are we not all fools? See how silver-fair hangs yon web upon the branch! Methinks its name is Britain: and there in the centre crouches its black spider-king. No, no! he glitters, he is all whiteness, all goodness—the pious, men have named him. But he preys too. Ha! ha! ha!

ELIDYR. Brother! Brother!

ARTEGAL. Dead men are wont to use no ceremony even with armoured kings: and I am dead. Thus will I sit then, and hold a grim state still. Was not I monarch long ere thou wore'st crown? I am weary: let me rest.

ELIDYR. You shall rest upon a nobler couch than this.

ARTEGAL. Ay, soon.

ELIDYR. Will you not hear me? I do but hold the crown in trust for you: I have waited anxious years, I have caused search long since to be made for you——

ARTEGAL. And now you have me in your very hands hollow. Have I not walked straight into the web?

Artegal

—Brother, your messenger tarries overlong. Ah, how the sun climbs! The hour has come to cease this gabbling. A while since, I named myself an unarmed man: but I gave my wits the lesser credit: yet that too shall be made truth. Take this dagger: 'twas brought to settle matters 'twixt thee and me: but now I have so little stomach left for my share in't that I am content to let all go. A brother's love works much, they say.

ELIDYR. What words are these? What would you have me do?

ARTEGAL (*rising*).

My breast is bared. One only boon I ask:
Toss these dead bones beneath a British soil,
Beneath these violets and this carpeting moss,—
I think the spring comes not more fairly up
In any land than ours . . . (*reels*)

ELIDYR. Have done! Have done!
You are wearied, brother: rest you. For this toy,
I'll cast it hence and give you mine in change,
To the full as sharp, and fairer set. Look now,
You that stand armed and I with empty hands!
You will hear me, so?

ARTEGAL. I will hear you. In my veins
The king-blood gallops still. Be it your will
To play me as the tiger, take your sport!
Your camp is near: a hundred at your call:
Play out the game.

ELIDYR. Shall never I win faith
For honest reverence and love of kin?

ARTEGAL.

Ay, when the wolf believes the shepherd's love,
Caught prowling near the flock.

Artegal

ELIDYR. Say rather, when
The rightful shepherd comes to take his staff
From the willing hireling's hand.

ARTEGAL. I am not so weak,
Nor you so simple, Elidyr, as dream
These more than wasted passages of words.
O I have met your match a hundred times!
Smooth-tongued, pale-hearted, moral to the world,
A sickly vice or two hid fast away:
Have I not summed you? Ay, I know my man,
Have tasted life . . . It brought no vasty joy:
One royal grief . . . enough. Speak what you will.
I ache for rest. No dawn breaks more for me.

ELIDYR.
You prate of imminent death, yet show no fear—

ARTEGAL.
I have done with fear. The man who fears would
live;

I have done with life.

ELIDYR. What then, and have forgot
All duty owed—man's pillar through the shade?
Not if you be the Artegal I have dreamed—

ARTEGAL.
Dreams, dreams! You knew me wild, unthinking,
mad—

The exile knows no bonds. I stand without—

ELIDYR.
Not by my will!

ARTEGAL. In your name then. If I break
Your laws, my life stands forfeit. You are king,
I—beggar! Why waste words on't? Call your
men.

Artegal

ELIDYR.

You have judged me harshly and with little scathe.
Is't just to set on childhood's tender neck
The yoke of foul conspiracy and curst
Disloyal malison? Not mine! not mine!
That fell December night you were hurled forth
Where windy snow whirled on the frozen earth
'Neath skies of lead and steel, no voice of mine
Bade on the traitors: nor did later months
That act of treachery make known to me.
They told me you had ridden forth to hunt:
How should I gauge the truth of it? Scarce
climbed

From days of infancy, I'd never list
Ill tales of thee:—Brother! did'st thou not guess
The secret adoration smothered in
Behind the wide child-eyes? My Artegal,
The hero of my youth! long sought! long wept—

ARTEGAL.

So might it be? Her words—!

ELIDYR.

O could'st thou but have visioned forth this court
That day truth broke on me! The kingship, thrust
Unwilling in these hands, I wielded then
With fullest heart! All fell—

ARTEGAL.

Old Lystoval?

ELIDYR.

Not he. The old man mourned you, Artegal,
And sank in grief to death. But Cariol,
Torestal, Melamont, I banished all
The rest, or slew—O you were well avenged
That hour!

Artegal

ARTEGAL. And was this also wise or well?
Hardship and rags will change the hot complexion
Shades a man's thoughts . . . They had the right
 in it.

ELIDYR.
Brother!

ARTEGAL. I ruled in outrage. Yet not theirs
To chide me! Nay, nor yours to chastise them . . .
Well, well, 'tis done. I have rendered up in full
The count of blood and tears: to these the same.
I was wronged and wronging. Ay, and never yet
The wrong begot but sprang to giant growth
To choke the father of't! Now—now I see
How the land prospers, how the people smile,
The green fields wave upon a hundred hills,
The war-horns slumber;—brother, all is well!
Britain has found her ruler. I fare hence—
Who came with curses curdling in this heart
To slay you and so die: yet now demand
A British grave, no more.

ELIDYR (*kneels*). Nay, you have said it!
Britain has found her ruler. Since that hour
I knew my seeming falseness, I have sought
Thro' lands and oceans to undo the wrong:
A talisman to faith, I have but held
This sceptre for your coming: you are King!
No man can break this right, nor you yourself
Avoid it. Hangs not your very life a debt
To Britain? The gods have brought you home at
 last.

ARTEGAL.
I have judged ill. You bear a generous heart.
Brother, farewell.

Artegal

ELIDYR. Nay, for you shall remain!

ARTEGAL.

I render all into your hands, and pass—

ELIDYR.

You cannot: you are Britain's. Long enough
I have quivered 'neath this baseness: never more:
Take up the kingship no man else shall wield!

ARTEGAL.

Ay, it is true! Revile me how men will,
I still stand King of Britain! All desired
Fell from me, but the burden of the blood
Suffers no stooping. I am Artegal!
And you—

ELIDYR. The willingest of your subjects!

ARTEGAL.

Rise,

Brother, friend, heir, the upright'st steward sure
That e'er held state in fee. I had not looked
To place my trust in any bosom more,
Framed to harsh deeds and schooled in misery,
Yon dagger beckoned to my only peace:
Thou art grown a goodly man—brother indeed—
The mist of blood drops from these aching eyes—
I loved this land. And she I greatlier loved—
No matter . . . Will the folk accept me king?

ELIDYR.

Their faith was ever yours: the court betrayed.
Ay, and their hearts went with me in the search
To brim with triumph when this tiding's known!—

ARTEGAL.

No other means: to bear it to the end:
A harder fate than death mayhap—but mine.

ELIDYR.

Come with me to my tent: you shall be furnished

Artegal

With food and drink, a garment and a sword:
Yours all. We'll summon every lord in state
To learn of this most fortunate conclusion.

ARTEGAL.

Most fortunate—! . . . Indeed
The stars of heaven have fought against my will.
Ilona, had'st thou lived!—Brother, I come.

Scene II.—Great Hall in the Palace at York. Dais in the centre with two thrones, one a step lower than the other. Crowds on either side, pushing and talking. Through a great archway on the right, with trumpets and music, enter in procession ARTEGAL robed and armed, CHAMBERLAIN, attendants, and later ELIDYR carrying a cushion with the crown on it, BORAN and other Lords, GUENDOLEN and her women.

ARTEGAL. For whom is this second throne?

CHAMBERLAIN. For the queen consort, my lord.

ARTEGAL. Remove it. There will be none: I shall not wed.—Nay, let it remain.

[Seats himself on the throne: ELIDYR presents him with the crown, which he takes and crowns himself amidst acclamation. ELIDYR pays homage, and other nobles present. HERALD steps forward.]

HERALD. Let it be known this day to every quarter of Britain, in her shores, her isles, her fens, her forests, her hills, her meads, by river and stream, by fell and pasture, by town and waste, that

Artegal

Artegal the King is returned and restored to his rightful sovranity by Elidyr the Pious Prince, to rule and reign, while life shall last, supreme monarch over all these lands and borders! Let Britain accept her King and cry him Hail! Hail! Hail!

ALL. Hail! Hail! Hail!

ARTEGAL.

People of Britain! For to you I speak,
Whose mighty ghosts in countless legions stand
About this hall of Kings: whose voices cry,
Circling about me in infinity,
Even in the winds that whirl, the waves that roar:
—Give me of your eternal stubbornness!
Let us be just and free, ruler and ruled,
That this great land go ringing down the years
A name of might, inflexible and strong,
Shield to the true and terror to the false! . . .
I come to you, one who has drunken deep
The bitterness of angry circumstance:
One who has hungered, fasted, suffered, wept,
Hoped and despaired: desired—with empty arms:
Sinned and repented: seen his every prayer
Denied: and at the end must here resume
The burden he bore once ingloriously,
And now would gladly yield to hopeful youth.
But kingship may not pass. Prince Elidyr,
He who so nobly for mine honour held
This crown I was not worthy of, shall wed
Our gracious Princess of the valiant Scots,
With her, in time's fulfilment, to uplift
The sceptre here laid down, a greater thing
Than when he took it. Brother, to my hand!

Artegal

And you, fair sister, joined in loving bonds,
Stand ever by my throne and in my heart.

[Music and shouting.]

You have given me majestic welcome all.
In that stern school where I have learned my task
I find it weak to shed wild promises
About an unstepped path: be deeds my words:
In actions my redeeming. Yet one vow
I make: henceforward Britain be my star!
Her wealth, her gladness, and her honoured peace
Shall all my careful thoughts with projects fill;
No more I ask of life. My wandering heart
Is home returned at last.

[Suddenly, aside to the CHAMBERLAIN.]

Bid them disperse.

[All go but ARTEGAL, ELIDYR, and GUENDOLEN.]

ARTEGAL. Fair lady, you reign empress over a noble
heart: when youth and virtue go hand in hand,
the very gods will smile. Yet, and I say it from
my soul, in you meseems my Elidyr finds his match.
Like will to like, they say; and there are fairer
unions even than valiance and beauty. Two hearts
of gold are met, and the world dawns anew.

GUENDOLEN. Sir, you are gracious. In so glad an
hour, may we not desire for you also the celestial
gift?

ARTEGAL. Nay, gentle sister, ask for me no more
gifts. I have learned to dread deeper the smile of
heaven than its tonic harshness. I play my part.
It is enough.

GUENDOLEN. Alas!—Elidyr!

ELIDYR. It may be the world wears darkened looks

Artegal

to-day, brother, and memory plays coward tricks at times. But great doors swing wide before you, illimitable power, wielded by garnered wisdom, lies ready to your hand: all that I had never dared attempt, you shall with ease accomplish. Ah think, think but of the vast immensity of loyal hearts about you! What you may conceive! What you may do! What you may attain!

ARTEGAL. Brother, if at the end of a long life one should look back upon one quarter of his early aspirations fulfilled, the gods might with justice greatly demand thanks. I shall dream no more dreams . . . Be happy . . . Leave me now.

[ELIDYR and GUENDOLEN go slowly out, looking back. ARTEGAL sits motionless for a moment, then rises and paces up and down the hall. Finally he lifts the crown from his head and places it upon the consort's throne, slowly sinking upon his knees beside it.

ARTEGAL.

Ilona! Queen and love, I shall not fail
To prosecute thy bidding, though I reign
Alone in desolation. Be thou close!
The crown of love is death . . . I wait—I wait.

Poems

The Evil that was of Old

ONCE, æons past, I moved and dwelt
In huts of stone and clay :
High o'er the lake, on bird-swept down
Our granite circle lay.

Memory flags fast, yet moments still
The barbarous life recall :
The glory of my chief's success,
The anguish of his fall.

One horrid shape of haunting fear
Seemed every hour to fill :
There was a man I strove to slay :
He lived, and mocked me still.

I thought I starved him to his death,
Or slew him from my lair :
I rested. Froze in me the breath—
He stood and flouted there !

He was a fiend all fiends above,
The hand that laid him low
Should blessings claim: 'twas not for me
Such justice to bestow.

Poems

He dogged my steps: I turned about
To view him in my place:
He poisoned sleep: I waked in fear,
His eyes upon my face.

Grey veils of time at length rolled down
To blot the past in night,
Long years of sleep and later lives
Dead horrors to requite.

To-day I walk the same wide earth
But breathe a lighter air;
The heart of ancient mysteries
With fuller knowledge share:

Yet still when darkness grips the soul,
Some primal chord vibrates,
And the old terror gibbers forth
Through slumber's echoing gates.

In a great city's labelled hall
Of relics strange and sere,
I stepped one idle day; and read,
'The Stone Age man lies here.'

A mist of blood and horror rocked
About my failing breath,
The man I could not kill crouched there
And grinned at me in death!

Poems

A Rescue

LIGHTS in the castle,
Lights o'er the wall,
Mirth in the bower
And song in the hall;
O'er the black water
Streams the red light,
Path through the darkness,
Mysterious, bright!
Loud ring the shouts
Of the kings in the hall,
On the wings of the nightwind
They echoing fall.

Through riot and song,
In her great carven chair,
Sits the pale lady
With wide eyes astare;
Silent and white
As a splash of the foam,
Death in her heart,
Far, far from her home.

Dash, frothing breakers!
And roar, angry wind!
But the kings in the castle
To danger are blind.

Poems

Skoal to the Viking!
Upraises the cry;
Skoal! And they drink it
With Death standing by.

Came there a sound?
Nay, the queen sits like stone.
Clamour hath drowned it . . .
The night is near gone.

'Tis but the thunderclap
Breaking o'erhead:
Fill up the drinkhorns
Once more with the mead.
Out! They are on us—
What cries on the blast!
Flash forth the swords—

(Ha! Comes rescue at last?)
Down, drunken tyrant!
Lie there in thy gore:
Home, thou pale prisoner,
Flit fast to the shore . . .

.
Red breaks the dawn
From the east to the west:
She is safe on his ship,
Held close to his breast!

Poems

The Ghost

THE poor ghost stood by the window,
And the room was bright within;
The good-man tired with his labours,
And the housewife settled to spin.
The dogs lay sleeping beside the blaze,
And the children laughed and romped at their plays—
'Oh!' cried Avice, 'how the wind blows cold,
God grant the sheep are all safe in the fold!'
 'Amen,' said the master.

The sad ghost peered through the curtain,
And the room was gay with light;
'An excellent meal,' quoth the master,
And the housewife's smile grew bright.
But the old dog sniffed by the fire's side,
And the children stopped, and their eyes grew wide—
'Hark!' cried Avice, 'how the wind blows loud!
And look, in the candle—a shroud! a shroud!'
 'Hush, hush,' said the mistress.

The good-man laughed and filled up his pipe,
And the wind blew fast on the moor;
She crept from the warm hearth-circle
To lift up the latch of the door.

Poems

'Oh, my love, is it you that are calling?' she cried;
'Ah rest, for it's soon I'll be there by your side!'
And a breath came out of the whirling night,
And a cold hand fell on her tresses bright—
 'Shut that door,' said the master.

Poems

The Glamour of the North

NORTH land, north land, where the blue hills lie,
North land, where the curlews are calling,
What mystery lies in your great brave heart
When the rowans red are falling?

North land, north land, where the grey clouds cling,
North land of the pine and the heather,
What magic can draw us to love you so
In the mist and the dear wild weather?

It is strength, it is love, 'tis the wine of the blood,
And the valour of ages olden;
We come for one clasp of your strong warm hand,
And our hearts for ever are holden!

Poems

Dawn at Laghouat

CITY of pearl and moonlight,
Mosque and palm,
A jewelled crest
Set in the desert's calm,
Where violet hills
Stoop to the arid plain,
And gaunt Sahara
Smiles to Heaven again!
Beyond the stately groves
The morning star,
Herald of rose-white dawn,
Shimmers afar.

From the high minaret
Upon the wall,
Floats faintly down
The sad muezzin's call;
In the dim square,
Up-loading for the gate,
The harsh-voiced camel
Roars his rage and hate:
Like fire behind the palms
Up storms the sun
El-Aghouat, awake!
Thy night hath run!

Poems

The Call of the Desert

SHINES the moon yet so white upon thy sand,
Sahara, red and gold?
Beyond thy mountains, O mysterious land,
Sleep'st as thou slept of old?

Slumbrous beneath the aching glare of day,
Brooding through purple night,
Drawing the heart from far, so far, away,
—Forth from the east comes light!

O burning winds of Africa, blow down!
Come, for my spirit calls;
Sweep me afar where mighty palm-groves crown
El-Aghouat's fairy walls:

Far from this misty land of valleys green,
Of tamely flowing brook,
Of level path, trim park, and meadows sheen—
O for the one gold look!

Over Ghardaia's orange cliffs to gaze
Down on the treasured wheat,
When drowsy sakkiehs murmuring in the haze
Make musical the heat.

Poems

Or when, night stooping o'er the breathless land,
 The magic moonbeams fall
On faint far minaret, on trackless sand—
 The desert spaces call!

Poems

The 'Victory' of Samothrace

O WIND-SWEPT Victory of Samothrace!
What wonder-smile lit up triumphal eyes,
Bright with immortal joy, when on the prow
Of that great galley, breasting seas of storm,
You came—unto the Isles!

O face unknown
Yet all divined, hair tossed upon the rain,
Deep brow, lips crying glory, eyes aflame,
Even as with strong wings spread, and arms upraised
To hold the torch of triumph, firmly poised
Upon the barque you stood: and screaming winds
Tore fiercely at your limbs, and the salt foam
Surged madly round your feet, and in your ears
Crashed shattering the thunder-throated roar
Of all-o'erwhelming conquest!

Thus, O thus,
Two thousand years ago, exultant, came
Victory to Samothrace!

Poems

The Flowering Aloe

*(The aloe flowers once in a hundred years, and
then dies)*

A HUNDRED years to hoard thy sweetness up,
A hundred years to hold this golden bloom
Clasped in thy long grey arms as in a cup,
Hugged to thy heart as fearful of the doom
Which life with death must crown—O foolish plant!
This thou wast born to foster, child of might,
Through thy long century of motherhood
Must find at last the light.

A hundred years to dream the long hours past,
A hundred years in darkness still to wait:
Till, at the sun's strong call, to burst at last
Up to the day, obedient to fate!
Exultant, glorious, queen above all peers,
Spurning the dying plant that gave her birth,
Squandering in one brief month the patient years,
The Aloe Flower her royal bloom uprears,
And Fate strikes swiftly—and she sinks to earth.

Poems

Moonlight at Naples

THE sky hangs sapphire over Naples Bay,
The great moon paling every timorous star,
Hushed is the haste and turmoil of the day,
The noisy loiterer bends his steps afar;

In some dim gulf the tawdry flaunting town
Sinks and is lost; enchantment reigns to-night;
The old sea-castle blots a mere of foam;
The distant isles are faint with mystic light.

Slumbers the mountain of the fiery doom,
Watchful, mysterious, vague above the sea;
Deep, deep beneath, like little glow-worms loom
Slow moving lights of ships about the quay.

The quiet water ripples with the stream,
The silver pathway wends afar—afar—
Here may the tired heart rest an hour, and dream
Of some great peace in some remotest star.

Dearest, will you forget, as never I,
This night of wonder underneath the moon?
Was it not writ for us long ages by
In magic numbers of some ancient rune?

Poems

There was a northern castle on a hill—
And these are mountains of a southern shore—
But what has once been, must be yet, and will.
You come again. And I, for evermore.

Poems

Rome

ROME the new and Rome the old,
Rome of stone and Rome of gold,
Mother-wolf of strenuous tribes,
Flaunting queen of costly bribes,
Rome of empires lost and won,
Rome of vestal and of nun,
Where the tired Tiber crawls,
Washing blood from crumbling walls,
Rome of splendid starry deeds,
Rome of cruel thunder-creeds,
Rome for thrice a thousand years
Built on triumph, toil and tears,
Rome of glory and of doom,
Rome the palace, Rome the tomb,
City of the Seven Hills,
Conqueror of struggling wills,
Tender, cruel, false, and rare,
Faithful, fierce, and wonder-fair,
Every spirit here finds home,
Every pathway leads to Rome!

Poems

Vanished Gods

ARE they so vanished? Listen! Once
In that great Villa Hadrian built,
(Whose stones, through many a thousand suns,
Lie scattered now and spilt,)
I saw a sudden shadow pass,
The happy daylight faded out,
A dreadful shiver shook the grass,
And evil lurked about.
My heart stood numb with icy fear;
The Goat-foot God was crouching near!

Have ye not marked where rivers purred
Through quiet valleys half asleep,
Sudden the stream is whipped and whirled,
And ripples dash and leap?
Streaks of wild sunlight flash across,
Winds in high branches strain and roar,
The corn-fields, caught with fury, toss—
And all is still once more.
Dionysus and his joyous train
Stream through the fruitful land again.

And there are forests, deep and far,
No eye of man hath ever seen,

Poems

So thick that scarce a wandering star
 May peep beneath the green :
Yet when the moon's soft beams aglow
 From darkness darker shadows press,
A shining figure glides below,
 And in her loveliness,
Artemis, she of heaven's own birth,
Still stoops to kiss the slumbering earth.

Poems

Dante

O THOU that walked with the stars and trod through
hell!

Living, yet passed that swift and perilous way,
Returning to warn, to condemn, O tell us, tell,
In what far circle wanders thy ghost to-day?

Spirit austere of the dreamer! Is it rest
In distant planes of the light we cannot know,
At feet of thy childhood's angel, her praised best
Of all the women that dwelt on this earth below?

Or were there regions beyond, which the soul un-
chained

Discovered, remote and darkling; deeper hells,
Purgatories subtler to purge what of dross remained,
A wider heaven where the poet's song upswells?

We of the earth dream still as thine age of old,
Still on the quest eternal rides each young heart,
But thou that pressed to the close, O voice of gold!
Soldier and seer, stand'st still on thy peak, apart.

Poems

A Heretic

I SAW her led across the square,
Towards the faggots piling high;
I paused to see her passing by;
Her eyes were strange, and wild her hair.

With head erect and eyes aflame,
With bounden hands and naked feet,
She visioned worlds beyond the street,
Beyond the death of fear and shame.

With cords they bound her to the stake,
Her slender wrists were hung with chains;
She smiled to heaven through her pains,
And died in silence none might break.

The priests declare her faith was sin,
Her soul was black, she sank to hell:
I think she had not died so well
But for some purer hope within.

When incense clouds cathedral spires,
And holy bells about me ring,
I can recall no other thing
But those strange eyes that smiled through fires.

Poems

To Scotland, from Italy

THE skies are grey in the tender north
And the distant hills are blue;
Purple and red the heather blooms,
And the hearts are kind and true.

O north wind, blow from the hills I love!
Come whistling over the wold;
Bring courage, and strength, and memory
Of the reckless days of old!

The years are long since that one dear eve
When the sun went down in flame,
And many a star has risen and set,
But life was never the same.

Then blow me dreams of the lonely pine,
And scent of the heather in rain,
Bring blood to the heart and fire to the eye,
And the old days come again,
My dear,
The old days come again!

Poems

The Only Way

When helpless hands are stretched demanding aid,
 To seem afraid;
To stand far off and to deny a smile,
 O this is vile!
Yet honour bids what love could never do:
 We must be true.

You will remember when the winds prevail,
 We did not fail;
And when the stormy waters overflow,
 You still will know
That there was one who, mindful of the right,
 Passed out of sight.

Far down the vista of the lonely years,
 Shall we know fears?
Will you remember me, I wonder, yet,
 Or soon forget?
Peace dwell betwixt us now, whate'er betide!
 The world is wide.

Poems

A Night in the Dark Ages

THE Castle flamed in the midnight sky :
 (There was no moon that night);
But a frightened breeze crept whimpering by,
 And after it sparks of light :
Far down in the forest arose a cry,
 And a flutter of something white.

What lies so low on the wilting grass ?
 Why stare those eyes so wide ?
Was this ever a breathing man, alas,
 That some fearful woe betide ?
O a lonely ghost this night must pass,
 Bereft of a stolen bride !

Or ever the morning star looked down,
 They had borne her far o'er the wold ;
But the fair pleasaunce lay smirched and brown
 Where the blackened tower stood cold :
And over the hills the dawn rose up,
 Splendid in crimson and gold !

Poems

Schwärmerei

I LOVE you; do you know it?
I think so.
You've the heart of a poet—
You must know!

When upon my vision
First you broke
Braving all derision,
Love awoke.

When you took no notice,
Passing by,
Hot as fire my throat is—
Love will die!

When you with that dearer
Smile you had,
Turned and called me nearer,
Love was glad.

When I stood transcending
By your side,
Love was to life's ending
Glorified!

Poems

The Land of Faery

O BLACK against a primrose sky,
 Far hills of faery!
About my feet the waving rye;
Beyond the fields the pine-trees high;
I may not reach you though I try,
 Dear hills of faery!

Far from this grey and homely land
 Where human folk abide,
Where trouble comes with iron hand,
And heavy joy with pleasures planned,
Your palaces and castles stand,
 Dark hills of eventide!

At set of sun I see you plain,
 Blue mountains and pale sea,
Green meadows where, a child, I've lain,
Peaks I have scaled; and O it's fain
Would I might tread your paths again,
 Lost land of faery!

Poems

Sanctuary

BEYOND that marge where the swift spirit slips
From out the slumbering flesh, and through
 strange lands
Of half-seen marvel speeds, until it slips
 Adown the moon, a great cathedral stands.

Immeasurably vast, immensely far,
 Dim with all mystery of ancient rite,
Hallowed and consecrate as temples are
 That hold enshrined the inviolable light :

Once did I stand within that secret fane,
 Once on my ears the mystic mandate fell;
O sanctuary of peace! Again, again,
 Bid me return, my orisons to tell!

Have I fall'n short of all I should obey?
 Have I so greatly failed that should achieve?
Ah, scourge my spirit if it laggard stay,
 Great Power divine! but let me still believe

That hour to come, when my uplifted eyes
 Once more shall with those vasty aisles be spanned,
And, veils down-rent from mightiest mysteries,
 My soul at last shall utterly understand!

Poems

Assurance

So little of love she knew, so little of love,
She dreamed I could be angered at her bliss,
Jealous and vexed, ah God in heaven above,
Because of this!

Visit her gently, open her blinded eyes,
Shew her through time what love may do and may
bear,
Unshackle her prisoned spirit and let it rise
To finer air.

Teach her that gifts once given are ta'en not back,
I gave her once for all of my very best,
Whether she glory or scorn it, she cannot lack,
Having possessed.

Poems

Faith and Science

A HANDFUL of dust! Is it man?
Ay, and the globe where he dwells:
A million of motes shall but span
The least of his myriad shells.

Then what of the spirit that finds
Worship is better than lust?
Shall this too be scattered by winds?
Nay, it is greater than dust.

And what of the voices that cry
Love is the heart of the plan?
Shall these eternally die?
Ah no! they are nobler than man!

Poems

The Condemned Lover

PART we must, but there's no despair,
('Tis a small thing to die,)
For love is love, be it here or there,
(And your head's at my heart and I kiss your hair,
Ah weep not, Dear, tho' the world was fair);
Goodbye, Goodbye!

Is it so hard then, that I should go
For a little while?
Since love is love, and we two should know
That the winds of death can never blow
One spark from the flame that's all aglow
In your storm-sweet smile!

Dearest, doubt never, come what may,
That I love—I live:
You shall know me near when the morn brings day,
You shall feel me close when the moon shines grey,
Nor devil nor man hath power to stay
This bond I give.

So part we must; but death is a song,
(One kiss, my Sweet);

Poems

For the death that is died to banish a wrong
Leaves pride that is scornful and love that is strong,
And or ever the lonely years be long,
 We shall meet! We shall meet!

Poems

Dawn

Out over the edge of the world itself,
 Into the arms of God,
Far from the hard and beaten paths
 That the steps of man have trod,
A soul like a flame sprang freed from its shame,
 With a glorious lightness shod.

'I have drunken deep of the bitter cup,
 I have eaten the bread of pain,
I have toiled till strength has ebbed away,
 And the labour was all in vain.
Now give me rest through the worlds to come,
 Out of the wind and rain.

'Let me dream no more of a tender home
 And wake to a loveless morn;
Wipe out from my heart all human hopes
 That open the door to scorn:
—And into the Everlasting Arms
 I pass with the light of Dawn!'

Poems

The Garden of Memory

LAST night I dreamed and saw you,
Friend of the years gone by;
Wandering, sorrow-laden,
In the garden of memory.

But the flowers all had faded,
And the fountains played no more:
There was ice upon the lily pond,
And frost the roses o'er.

And you looked towards the past, dear love!
You had no eyes for me
Who wrung my hands and called to you
In the garden of memory!

Poems

Looking Back

O THE lost loves and the dead loves
And the loves that are buried and gone!
How the years drift and the hearts shift
And the world rolls on!

Do you think oft as you lie soft
Of the days that were merry and kind?
Of the spilt tears and the changed years
Fallen so far behind?

O a face here and a face there,
How they beckon through the gloam!
We shall meet yet when the stars set
And our steps turn home.

Poems

The Path

O STRANGE command! Whose tyrannous voice
Will hearken unto no delay,
But draws with scorn of easier choice
My footsteps to the bitter way;
Fierce urge of some mysterious end,
That ceases never, soon or late,
From love, from joy, from home, from friend,
It calls me, and I dare not wait.

Fain would I linger where the glades
Spread softly down 'mid sun and flowers,
Or where the quiet forest shades
Beckon to meditative hours,
Or in some sheltered home, where gleam
Blithe faces round the fireside;
Insistent still, through all my dream,
It calls, and may not be denied.

I will renounce my dear desire,
I leave all pleasures, warm and sweet;
Upon that rugged path and dire
I set my still reluctant feet.
Night swallows up my shrinking soul,
The air is thick with shapes of dread,
Tumultuous tempests rage and roll
About my all unsheltered head.

Poems

Faint, I pursue; forlorn, dismayed,
I struggle on, my need to kill;
And lo, the voice that constant bade,
Now bids no more, is fallen still.
Have I forsaken all, dread Power,
To be at last forsook of thee?
A whisper calms the clamorous hour,
'Yet I am Love; come thou to me.'

From passion, peace; from struggle, rest;
From agony, love all-transcending;
Perchance to glimpse the immortal quest
When the dark pilgrimage is ending;
I cannot tell if it be so,
I know not whence the word was said,
This is the way that I must go,
This is the path that I must tread.

Poems

Lures

VOICES, voices,
Voices within and without,
And most of them cry 'Give in!'
But a few of them cry 'Hold out!'
So we hold, hold, hold, hold,
Till the brazen world shall be turned to gold,
And the angels come with a shout.

Poems

The Promise

I TOUCH your hand, and so I part;
I may not linger by your side;
I speak no word; I rive no heart;
The sundering worlds are wide.

Yet for this moment were we born;
For this we sprang from out the night;
Far footsteps wandering forlorn
Drew to this point of light.

Life in the hour has found its aim,
The eternal quest is rendered sure;
I'll not behold your eyes again;
I cross your path no more.

Enough to know that you were mine
Before the stars in heaven were set,
Enough that a decree divine
Forbids us to forget.

In some far distant age I see
The barriers fall of bale and pain;
And through that glorious sunrise, we
Stretch hand to hand again!

Poems

Athelstane

And, how aspire such love to pay?
For earthly joy an earthly need
Were easy; 'twas your dearer need
Gave passionate glory to my day.

I think of you when storms are rife,
When the great moon shines on the sea,
In silence, in infinity:
Could I have given more than life?

To what dark question find reply,
O friend? Shall memory requite?
Beyond this pit, in quenchless light,
The stars abide . . . These shadows die.

Poems

Nocturne

THE night was brushed with stars, and dark the sea,
The little gleaming waves flowed soundlessly;
A spark flashed from the light-ship far away,
And silence brooded over all the bay.

Grave were the voices of the night, and sweet;
And spirits of the sea, with foam-white feet,
Rose up from their green-shining caves below,
And mixt their songs with those that float and flow.

Peace laid still hands upon the moving deep,
Such peace as knows the soul in dreamless sleep,
And through the calm my thoughts were all of thee:
The night was brushed with stars, and dark the sea.

Poems

The Watchers

GREAT Guardians of our destinies,
Whose watchful and unbending eyes
Are deep with ancient mysteries,

Sad with old knowledge of our fears
And wisdom of the approaching years
And tenderness of human tears,

Have I not seen ye long ago,
Your great wings beating to and fro,
In some strange hall where waters flow?

Blue, blue were all the walls around,
And voices spake, yet gave no sound,
But on my soul came peace profound.

Did ye not look with pitying gaze
Upon my half enraptured face,
And point me to the eternal ways?

'Come grief, come pain, come anguish sore,
One jewel seek from shore to shore,
Find Love, and all thy quest is o'er.

Poems

'Give all thou art beneath the sun,
Give nobly, as thy thread was spun,
Give Love, and all thy work is done.'

Dread Master of the mystery!
Shall I not soon return to Thee?
The great winds sweep thro' lives to be:
I wait thy purpose stedfastly.

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